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THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

NFAC - 4290-81/1

National Intelligence Officers

20 July 1981

Bill,

You asked what I think of this
approach to dealing with the proposed IIM
Soviet Perceptions of the Military Balance
in Central Europe.

What I think is that we should tackle
the issue of lowering the estimated scale
of the Warsaw Pact threat on the grounds
that the reliability of the Polish forces
at least is very low.

See my attached note.



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Attachment:
as stated above

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REVISING THE WARSAW PACT THREAT DOWNWARD

Developments over the past year in Poland highlight the long-standing question of the reliability of Polish (and other East European forces) in a conflict with NATO. There have long been grounds for doubting the reliability of East European forces at least in some contingencies. For instance, former SACEUR Andy Goodpasture tells me that he used to ask his staff if the 15 (Category I plus understrength) Polish divisions should be added to or subtracted from the number of Soviet divisions facing NATO in calculating the total threat. Not only would the subtraction of 15 Polish divisions from the Pact's 57 active divisions in Central Europe greatly weaken it vis-a-vis NATO, but Poland's location athwart the LOC to Germany could create further large difficulties for the Soviets.

It is clear that if Soviet forces occupy Poland, the Polish armed forces would thereafter not be effective contributors to the Warsaw Pact. The hostility of the Polish people and armed forces would rule out cooperation with the Soviets and might result in active resistance to the Soviets in the event of a conflict with NATO. Even if the Soviets put in place a complaisant leadership in Poland, it seems likely that the armed forces would have little ability or will to fight effectively on the Soviet's behalf.

Even in the absence of a Soviet invasion it is now very doubtful that the Polish forces would be relied on by Moscow. A genuine revolution has occurred in Poland and a central aspect of this revolution is gaining greater freedom from Soviet political dominance. It is difficult to imagine contingencies involving NATO forces in which Polish cooperation with the Soviets would do anything other than reduce the prospects for greater Polish autonomy.

This prospect has to look especially grim from Moscow. Isn't the likeliest planning assumption in Moscow to expect not only no or minimal cooperation from Polish forces and perhaps active opposition? Wouldn't it now have to plan on assigning large numbers of Soviet forces to the security of their LOC through Poland?

If this view is correct, the base-case threat to NATO for the foreseeable future should be rated as a good deal less than 57 active divisions.

Although the latest estimate on the Warsaw Pact forces, NIE 11-14 mentions Soviet recognition of the possible disaffection of Polish and other Eastern European countries, this factor is not given much weight in the overall estimate, certainly not as much as the argument here suggests.

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There will be resistance to the suggested change. Aside from the pain such a downward revision would cause some players in the Pentagon, some people will object on the ground that doing so will undermine our efforts to get the Europeans to do more on defense. Aside from the danger of carrying on the books a threat which is too high, the Europeans are capable of figuring out for themselves the implication of current developments in Poland for the threat they face.

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